Famous Illustrated
INDIAN FAIRYTALES

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The Prince and the Fakir

Once upon a time, there was a king who had no children. Frustrated that there would be no heir to inherit his throne, he decided to go high up the mountains to seek the blessings of a seer. On the way he met a fakir whom he bowed. The fakir asked him, “Son, what made you come to me?”

The king said, “Great soul! I think I’ve sinned; so I don’t have a child to take my place after me.”

The fakir said, “I will do something for you with my divine powers. Then you will have two sons. But, promise me, one of those sons will be mine.”

Then he took out two sweetmeats and handed them to the king, and said, “King! Take these two sweetmeats and give them to your wives; give them to the wives you love best.”

The king took the sweetmeats and put them in his bosom.

Then the fakir said, “King! In a year I will return, and of the two sons who will be born to you one is mine and one yours.”

The king said, “Well, I agree.”

Then the fakir went on his way, and the king came home and gave one sweetmeat to each of his two wives. After a year, two sons were born to the king.

The king now remembered the fakir’s wishes. He did not want to part with any of his sons. So he hid them both in an underground cellar.

Some time passed, and one day the fakir appeared, and said, “King! Bring me those son of yours!”

He thought, “Hmm... how will this fakir know who my sons are? I can easily fool him.” Then he arranged for two slave-girl’s sons to be produced there to the fakir.

The fakir looked at the boys. With his powers he understood that they were not the king’s sons. So he told, “King! Don’t go back on your words. I’ll curse you. These are not your sons; bring your children from the cellar.”

Astonished, the king ordered his sons to be brought before him. The fakir chose the eldest son and took him away.

As soon as he got to his place, the fakir placed a big pot in the fire in front of him and told the king's son, "Come round here, my pupil." There were about a hundred gallons of oil in the pot, and the fire was burning beneath it.

The king's son cleverly said, "Master first, and pupil after."

The fakir told him to come once, he told him twice, he told him three times, and each time the king's son answered, "Master first, and pupil after."

The fakir made a dash at the king's son, trying to throw him into the big pot. In a wink, the king's son, with all his might, lifted the fakir and threw him into the boiling oil. The fakir was burnt completely.

The king's son then looked around and found a key. Nearby, there was a small entry gate to another secret room. With the key, the boy opened the room. Inside were many men, two horses, two greyhounds and two tigers. The king's son let all men go free. Then he took the animals with him and set out for another country.

As he went along the road, he saw a man grazing a herd of calves. This man called out to him, "Hey boy! Who are you? This is my region! If you want to cross this over, you've to conquer me!" Though surprised, the king's son accepted the challenge.

The man said, "If I throw you, you shall be my slave; and if you throw me, I will be your slave." In no time, the king's son threw him down and said, "I will leave my beasts here while I go to the city. I appoint the tiger as guard over my property. And you are my slave; you too must stay here with my belongings." Then the king's son started off to the city and arrived at a pool. He found it to be very pleasant
and thought he would stop and bathe there.

The princess of the region was sitting on the roof of the palace. From there she saw this king's son. She saw his royal marks, and said to herself, "He must be a prince. I will marry him and no other."

Then she went to her father and said, "My father; I wish to marry."

The king made a proclamation, "Let all men, great and small, gather today in the hall of audience, for the king's daughter will today choose her groom. Whoever does she select, she will sprinkle a perfume on him"

All the men of the land assembled, and the traveller prince (the king's son) also came, dressed in fakir's clothes.

The king's daughter came out and sat in the balcony. She cast her glance around and noticed the traveller prince sitting in the assembly in fakir's attire.

The princess said to her maiden, "Take this perfume, go to that traveller dressed like a fakir, and sprinkle it on him."

The royal maid obeyed the princess's order, and the prince fakir was selected the groom of the princess.

Then the people said, "The girl has made a mistake." However, the king married off his daughter to the fakir, who was a actually a prince.

The occasion was grandly celebrated, though the king felt sad in his heart that while so many chiefs and nobles were sitting there, his daughter had chosen the fakir.

One day the traveller prince said, "Let all the king's son-in-laws come out with me today to hunt."

The son-in-laws wondered, "What is this fakir that he should go hunting?"

However, they all set out for the hunt, and fixed their meeting-place at a certain pool.

The newly married prince went to his tigers, and told his tigers and hounds to kill and bring in a great number of other smaller animals. When they did so, the fakir prince reached the meeting place. The other son-in-laws of the king also assembled there; but they had brought in no hunted animal or bird. So they had to return to the palace empty handed.

When the king saw the fakir prince bringing so much of hunted animals, he got satisfied that his son-in-law is a real brave person. The prince too now felt it the right time to reveal his true identity that he is indeed a prince. The greatly delighted king took him by the hand and embraced him. He seated him by himself, saying, "O prince, I'm happy that my daughter has made an excellent choice of you as her husband. Here and now, I declare you as my heir to the throne."

The Miracle Prince

In the king's garden of a great kingdom, played the gardener's daughter with her friends. Every day, the gardener's daughter used to tell them, "Hey friends! Shall I tell you a great secret of my future? I'll marry a handsome man, and will have a beautiful son who'll be very handsome with a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin."

The king of the land had four queens, but none of them could bear a child. This troubled the king. One day, he overheard the gardener's daughter's talks and thought, "Hmm... That would be a wonderful imagination! I wish I had a boy of that description!" He decided to marry the girl, and soon the marriage took place. However, the four queens grew jealous of the new queen.

A year later, the new queen was about to give birth to a baby, when the king was out on his hunting in a far of forest. The four queens came to the new queen and told her, "In this land it is the custom before a child is born to bind its mother's eyes with a handkerchief that she may not see it just at first. So let us bind your eyes." The astonished new queen took some time, and then said, "Very well, bind my eyes." The new queen had a beautiful little son, with a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin.

But, before she could see him, the four wicked queens took the boy to the nurse and said, “Hey! Kill the baby tonight or take him away, so that his mother may never see him.”

The four queens then put a stone beside the new queen, unfolded her eyes and said, “Look! This is your son!” The new queen cried bitterly.

When the king came home, he was furious hearing that his new queen had given birth to a stone. He ordered imprisonment for her immediately.

In the middle of the night the nurse took the box in which was the beautiful little prince, and left it in the jungle. But secretly, the king’s horse who was from the fairyland, had been watching all this. He swallowed the baby and kept it secretly inside his stomach. Days went by. Every now and then the horse took out the little prince, and played with him. Thus, he took good care of the child till he came of age.

When the stable owner found this one day, he reported the matter to the wicked queens. They plotted, this time, to kill the horse.

The horse, with his magical sense had overheard them. He brought out the child, gave him saddle, bridle and new clothes and said, “Put on me the saddle, take the bridle, wear the royal clothes. Also take these sword and gun, and mount on my back.”

The horse burst out of his stable with the prince on his back. He galloped away to the jungle, reached another country and then stopped. He said to the boy, “Unsaddle me and take off my bridle. You must now go away and find service with someone in this country. I will always stay here to help you when you want me. Before you go, twist my right ear.” The boy did so, and his horse instantly became a donkey. “Now twist your right ear,” said the horse again, and when the boy did so, he was no longer a handsome prince, but a poor, common-looking, ugly man.

The prince came across a grain merchant and said, “Sir, I am a poor man. Would you mind my service?” The merchant agreed.

This grain merchant lived near the king’s palace. One night, as the boy went out to relax in the king’s garden, he began to sing a lovely song. The seventh and youngest daughter of the king heard him, fell for his voice, called him to her and asked, “Who are you? Where do you come from?”

“I am a very poor man,” the prince said. “I came from my country to seek my fortune. I am now one of the grain merchant’s servants.”

The princess went away. For three more nights the boy sang in the king’s garden.

Slowly, the princess fell in love with the young boy. She went to her father, the king, and said to him, “Father, I wish to be married; but I must choose my husband myself.” Her father consented to this, and invited all the kings in the nearby lands.

When the kings had all arrived, the princess mounted her elephant, with a gold necklace in her hand. The prince too came there, not as a suitor, but as an onlooker.

The princess rode all round the garden, looked at all the kings and princes, finally hung the gold necklace round the neck of the boy, the grain merchant’s servant. Then she put him on her elephant, and took him to the palace.

At this everybody said, “What is this foolishness? How can the king’s daughter think of marrying this poor, common man!” However, the king and the queen were quite content with their daughter’s choice. The marriage went off well.

The young prince one day went to the jungle and told the horse, “Friend, I have married the youngest princess and when we were married everybody laughed at her for choosing me. My wife is very sad that her six sisters’ husbands are good hunters, but I’m not. Today I would like to hunt very much.”

“Well, then,” said the horse, “twist my left ear” and as soon as the boy had twisted it, the donkey became a horse again. “Now,” said the horse, “twist your left ear, and you will see what a beautiful young prince you will become.” So the boy twisted his own left ear, and there he stood no longer a poor, common, ugly man, but a grand young prince with a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin. Then he put on his splendid clothes, saddled and bridled his horse, got on to it with his sword and gun, and rode off to hunt. That day, he shot a great many birds and animals.

Then, in the evening, he rode off to the king’s palace. All the people looked at him and admired his beauty. But no one recognised him. When he came near the king’s palace, all the servants asked him who he was.

“I am the husband of your youngest princess,” he answered. “Call her, I want to speak to her.”

The servants called the princess who came and asked the prince, “Who are you? Why do you say you are my husband? My husband is a very poor, common-looking man.”

“That is true,” he answered, “but now I am your husband. See, here is your necklace, and here are the ring and the handkerchief that you gave

me on our wedding day."

When the princess saw the golden necklace, she believed him. She was very glad that her husband was such a beautiful young prince. Then she took him into the palace, and showed him to her father and mother and to everyone. Thus the young prince lived as before in the king's palace with his wife, while his horse lived in the king's stables.

The horse, when he was in the jungle with the young prince before he got married, had told him the whole story of his birth, and said, "When you are married," he said to him, "I will take you back to your father's country." Therefore, now, the horse said to him, "It is time for you to return to your father".

The prince went to his wife and revealed this to her. With the consent of the king and the queen, the prince and the princess then travelled to the prince's country with a large army.

When the king, his father, saw his camp, he was very much alarmed that a great king had come to make war on him. He sent one of his servants with a message to know who they were, to which the young prince wrote in reply, "O great king, I have not come to make war on you. I am a prince who has come to see your country, to meet you and give you a grand feast, to which everyone in your country must come for a week."

Delighted, the king ordered everyone in his kingdom to attend the grand feast. All, except the prince's mother came. When all the people were assembled, the prince saw his mother was not there. He asked the king, "Are you sure everyone in your country has come to my feast?"

"Yes, everyone, I'm sure," said the king.

"But I am sure one woman has not come – your gardener's daughter, who was once your wife, now a servant in your palace."

Then the prince told his servants to take his finest palanquin to fetch the gardener's daughter. They were to bathe her, dress her in beautiful clothes and handsome jewels, and then bring her to him in the palanquin.

While the servants were bringing the gardener's daughter, the king thought how handsome the young prince was. He also noticed the moon on his forehead and the star on his chin.

The palanquin arrived with the gardener's daughter. The young prince went and took her out of it, and brought her into the tent. He then made a great bow to her. The gardener's daughter wondered at his kindness and thought, "Who is this handsome prince, with a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin? Which country does he come from?"

Two or three days thus passed in feasting, and all that time the king and his people were talking about the prince's beauty, wondering who he was.

One day the prince asked the king, "Do you know who I am?"

"No," said the king. "Tell me who you are?"

"I am your son," answered the prince, "and the gardener's daughter is my mother."

Shocked at first, the king shook his head sadly. “No, you can’t be. She only gave birth to a stone!” The prince now took the king to his horse and asked, “Do you know whose horse that is?”

The king looked at his fairy horse, and said, “That is my horse!”

The horse told the king, “Your Majesty, he’s your real son. Your wicked queens had plotted against him. So, I took him away and brought him up.” Hearing that the beautiful prince was indeed his son, the king was so glad that he put his arms round him, kissed him and cried with joy. He then ordered the execution of his queens, after which, he, his wife - the gardener’s daughter - and the prince with his wife, all lived happily together ever after. The horse did not return to the fairies’ country, but stayed always with the young prince, and never left him.

The Magic Fiddle

Once upon a time there lived seven brothers and a sister. The brothers were married, but their wives did not know home management. And so, the responsibility was taken up by the brothers' only sister. She did the entire household work, and was loved by her brothers. The wives of the brothers slowly grew jealous of her abilities, and her brothers' attention on her. They all planned to send her out of the house somehow.

One of these wives knew magic, and that helped her to execute the secret plan against the sister. She conjured up a genie through her magical powers and declared, “Hey genie! Today, when my sister-in-law goes out to fetch water, let the water vanish and disappear again and again. Let this go on for some time, so that her work gets delayed. She

will bring water late, and her cooking will be delayed. When her brothers come home for food after work, they'll get angry at her and would punish her."

At noon, when the sister went to bring water from the pond, the water suddenly dried up before her, and she began to weep. Then after some time, when she tried to fill her pitcher with water, it once again disappeared. Frightened, she began to wail and call out her brothers. Then after a while the water appeared again. But her attempts to fill her pot with water were in vain. Instead the water started rising in level. The water continued to rise until it reached her knee, waist, and then neck. Finally, the water overpowered her, drowning her at last. The pot was filled with water, but the girl sank and got drowned. The genie turned her too into a genie, and disappeared.

After a time, the genie girl reappeared as a bamboo growing on the banks of the pond, where she tried to fill her pitcher. When the bamboo had grown tall, a brahmin passing by said to himself, "This will make a splendid fiddle." He thus decided to cut the bamboo, and the next day brought an axe. When he was about to cut, the bamboo called out, "Hey man, do not cut at the root, cut higher up." When he lifted his axe to cut high up the stem, the bamboo cried out, "Do not cut near the top, cut at the root." When the brahmin again prepared himself to cut at the root as requested, the bamboo said, "Do not cut at the root, cut higher up," and when he was about to cut higher up, it again called out to him, "Do not cut high up, cut at the root."

The brahmin now realised that there must be some genie in the form of the bamboo shoot. However, taking courage, the brahmin cut down the bamboo at the root, and made a flute out of it. The music that came out of the flute when he blew it was heavenly. His music delighted all who heard it. The brahmin carried it with him when he went begging. Unlike other times, he got so much in return for his music that he returned home every evening with a full wallet.

Once when he was passing by the girl's house, blowing his flute, the brothers heard his music and were greatly moved. One of the brothers offered to buy the flute, but the brahmin refused to part with it, even for a great price.

It so happened that the brahmin once went to the house of a village chief to entertain his music. After playing a tune or two on his flute, the brahmin asked for something to eat. The village chief offered to buy his flute, offering a very high price. Still the brahmin would not sell it.

The village chief made him unconscious by mixing some herbs in his food without his knowledge. When the brahmin fell unconscious, the village chief replaced the magical flute with an ordinary flute. When the brahmin gained consciousness, he left for his home.

The next day, as he tried to blow his flute, he realised that it was not his magical flute. He recollected whatever happened the previous day with the village chief. He suspected the village chief with foul play. He reached straight to his house and demanded his magical flute. The village chief laughed at him and drove him away.

The chief's son, being a musician, started to play on the brahmin's fiddle, and delighted everyone with his melodious music. When the entire household was busy with its works, the girl from the bamboo came out of the fiddle and prepared food for them all. Then she took some and

kept it under the son's bed for him to eat. After this, she went back to the fiddle. When this started happening every day, the members of the household thought that some girl friend of the boy did this, and so they did not trouble themselves to find out how it came about.

However, the chief's son resolved to find out the whereabouts of his well-wisher. He said to himself, "I'll definitely find out who she is; it's not nice to be looked upon by others due to this." So, the next day, when the girl was to arrive, he hid himself in a corner in a pile of firewood. The girl came out of the bamboo fiddle, and began to do her hair to look beautiful. Then she cooked the meal. After eating a portion of it, she placed the young man's portion of food under his bed as always and was about to enter the fiddle again, just then he, running out from his hiding-place, caught her in his arms.

The magic girl exclaimed, "O leave me!"

But the young man said, "No, I'll not. You'd been taking care of me. I'd like to marry you."

The girl replied, "It's not possible. I'm a genie. I cannot marry you."

The boy still persisted, "You are determined to serve me, and I too accept you heartily as my wife. Then why bother you being a genie. As long as you are human, you'll be my wife."

As the two were proposing to each other, the other family members returned. They found her to be half human and half genie. They felt that the boy must be lucky enough to have such a girl as his wife. The chief's son and the girl were married off.

After a few years, the genie girl's brothers became very poor, and came to the village chief to have his favour. The genie girl recognised her brothers, but the brothers did not. She prepared a meal for them and laid it before them. As they tasted it they immediately recognised that the food could be cocked on their dead sister.

The brothers asked her how she came back to life, and the girl to told them whatever had happened to her. The girl finally told them, "Brothers! You all must have known these things, but you did not save me. Still, I'm reborn here and am able to serve you. I'm happy with that."

The Prince Who Married Princess Labam

Once there was a great king who had a son who was totally irresponsible of his duties. He was pleasure loving and hunting was his pastime. Everyday he would go to the nearby forest and spend the day hunting animals.

The queen, his mother was also worried about his attitude. All the more, she was worried if he would come across the beautiful Princess Labam, who would entice him and take him away for ever. So, she called him and said, “Son! I know hunting is your pastime. But you must be very careful when you venture out into the jungle. Hunt wherever you

like on three sides; but you must never go to the fourth side. If you go there, you'll be in danger."

But, the inquisitive prince decided to know why his mother forbade him from going in the fourth direction. On reaching he found himself in another jungle, where there were numerous parrots. Seeing him, the parrots started flying, as the parrot King Hiraman tried to stop them, "Don't leave me alone. If you desert me like this, I will tell Princess Labam."

Surprised at the talking parrot, the prince asked Hiraman, "Who is this Princess Labam? Where does she live?" Hiraman said, "Why do you ask about her? We'll not tell you about her place because we can never get to the Princess Labam's country.

Dejected, the prince returned to his palace. He told his parents that he would go in search of the princess, and left them taking along a fine horse to ride upon, his hunting weapons and some eatables.

The prince rode on till he reached a jungle where he sat down under a tree. "Now," he said to himself, "I will eat and then continue my journey." He opened his packet and found some ants in it and so decided, "Never mind, let the ants eat them." Hearing him, the king of ants came and said, "You have been good to us. If ever you are in trouble, think of us and we will come to you."

The prince son thanked him, mounted his horse and continued his journey. He rode on until he came to another jungle, where he saw a tiger who had a thorn in his foot, roaring loudly with pain.

The prince took pity and said, "I will take the thorn out for you. But, if I make you walk, please don't eat me."

After the prince had removed the thorn the tiger said, "Sir, if you are ever in trouble, think of me, and I will come to you."

The prince continued his journey and came to the third jungle. Here he found four sadhus whose teacher and master had died, and had left four things - a bed, which carried whoever sat on it wherever he wished to go; a bag, that gave its owner whatever he wanted; a stone bowl that gave its owner as much water as he wanted; and a stick and rope, to which its owner had only to command if any enemy attacked him. The stick would beat them and the rope would tie them up.

The four fakirs were quarrelling over who should take what. The prince interfered and said, "Let me solve your dispute. I will shoot four arrows in four different directions. Whichever of you gets to my first arrow, shall have the first thing - the bed. Whosoever gets to the second arrow,

shall have the second thing - the bag. He who gets to the third arrow, shall have the third thing - the bowl. And he who gets to the fourth arrow, shall have the last things - the stick and rope."

To this they agreed, and the prince shot off his four arrows, and when the sadhus ran to fetch them, he goaded his horse, and away it galloped. Quickly, the prince sat on the bed, took the bowl, stick and rope, and the bag, and said, "Bed, I wish to go to Princess Labam's country." The bed instantly rose up into the air and began to fly and reached Princess Labam's country.

The prince came to a house where he saw an old woman.

"Who are you?" she said. "Where do you come from?"

"I come from a far country," he said. "Do let me stay with you tonight. I will give you food; I've this magical bag. At his command, the bag gave a delicious dinner. The old woman and the prince then dined together.

It was almost night, and the prince suggested the lady, "Mother, why don't you light a lamp?"

The old woman said, "Our king has forbidden the people in his country to light any lamps; for, as soon as it is dark, his daughter, the Princess Labam, comes and sits on her roof. She shines so much that the entire kingdom gets lighted up."

Soon the princess came all decked up. The prince was stunned by her beauty.

At midnight, when everybody had gone to bed, the princess came down from her roof, and went to her room. She went to her bed to sleep. The prince now got up and sitting on his magic bed said, "I want to go to Princess Labam's bed-room." The little bed carried him to the princess' room, where she lay fast asleep.

The young prince took his bag and said, "Bag, get me a very beautiful ring." The bag gave him the ring which he took to the princess and gently slid it on her finger. This awoke the princess with a jerk.

Bewildered, she asked "Hey, who are you? Why have you come here?"

The prince calmly said, "Do not be afraid, princess; I'm not a thief. I'm a prince. That Hiraman parrot told me about you and so I was eager to meet you."

"Well," said the princess, "Since you're a prince, I'll not punish you. I'll instead tell my father that I wish to marry you."

Greatly relieved, the prince returned to the old woman's place. In the morning, the princess told her parents about her desire to marry the

prince.

The king said, “Well, he can marry you, provided he deserves you. I’ll have to test him. Only if he gets through the test, I can give your hands off to him.” He then sent for the prince. On his arrival the king gave him eighty pounds of mustard seed, and said, “Crush this till tomorrow morning. If you cannot I’ll give you severe punishment.”

The prince remembered the ant king, and at once the ant king came. The prince showed the mustard seeds and told the ant about the king’s test. The ant’s king said, “Friend, be happy. We’ll will work together and get the oil out of these mustard seeds by morning.”

As promised, the ants did the work for the prince, who took the oil to the king.

Still the king said, “There’s still another test to seek my daughter’s hand. There, in the mountains far away, live two demons who threaten to destroy my kingdom if I don’t provide them with food regularly. You’ve to fight them and kill them.”

The prince now thought of the tiger for help. The tiger appeared immediately, and reassured him of its help. The prince took the tiger to the king and told the king, “O mighty king, this tiger will get rid of the demons.”

As promised, the tiger fought with the demons and killed them. “That is good,” said the king who declared, “O young man! You deserve my daughter.” Then the wedding took place with the consent of the prince’s father and mother. With all their blessings, the prince and the princess lived a happy life.

Balna

Once a rich man had seven beautiful daughters of whom the youngest called Balna was the cleverest.

In the absence of mother, the daughters grew up very well under the good care of their father. They took turns to cook food for their father. There was a poor widow around who had a daughter. Everyday, when the daughters prepared their food, the widow and her daughter came to them and begged for some firewood to cook their food. Balna did not like them coming everyday. However, her sisters helped the widow by giving her firewood.

One day, the father saw the widow and her daughter. Taking pity on their plight he proposed to the widow to marry him. The lady too agreed, and they got married. Days rolled by. The woman and her daughters were quite settled in the palatial building of the noble man. Slowly greed

overcame the widow and she started planning to get rid of the seven daughters.

One day, she kept herself in her room pretending to be terribly ill. When her husband asked her, she said, “Dear, I’m quite ill, and may die any time. Only one thing can save my life, but I know you will not do it.” He replied, “No, no, whatever it is, I will do.” She then said, “Kill the seven daughters of your first wife, put some of their blood on my forehead and on the palms of my hands. Their death will be my life.” Though taken aback, the husband went to fulfil her wishes.

He called his daughters and took them to a far off place. He gave them food laced with sleeping medicines. As the girls fell down asleep, he rode away, abandoning them. He then shot a deer, and returning home, put some of its blood on the forehead and hands of his wife. She too thought that he had really killed the daughters, and felt quite well. When the seven sisters awoke, they searched for their father, and after a long search gave up.

Now, the seven young sons of a neighbouring king came to the same jungle. They saw the girls crying. Moved by the sisters’ tale, the princes decided to marry them. Each of them married the girl equivalent to his order of birth. The seventh prince, the handsomest of all, married the beautiful Balna.

About a year after this Balna had a little son. Since the other prince and princesses did not have any child, they all grew fond of this boy.

A few days after the boy’s birth, Balna’s husband went for hunting never to come back. His six brothers went to search for him, and they too never returned. All the seven princesses grieved and feared that their husbands must have been killed.

One day when Balna was rocking her baby’s cradle, and her sisters worked in the room, a fakir, who was actually a wicked magician named Punchkin come. He gained entry in the name of giving blessing to the baby. He found Balna singing beside her little boy’s cradle. Taken away by her beauty, he proposed to marry her. Balna said in a quiet tone, “O, holy sir! My husband, I fear, is dead, but my little boy is still quite young. Heaven forbid that I should ever leave him, or marry you.”

Punchkin grew angry at this, “Since you will not come with me of your own free will, I will make you a dog.” He turned her into a black dog and dragged her away, without letting her sisters know what had become of her. As Punchkin passed through the palace gate the servants said to him, “Where did you get that pretty little dog?” And he answered, “One of the sisters gifted me this.” Soon after, the six elder sisters heard the little

baby cry. They were shocked to find the baby alone, and Balna nowhere to be seen. They questioned the servants, and came to know of the fakir and the little black dog. They guessed everything, and sent servants to all directions seeking them in vain. At last, they gave up and devoted themselves to taking care of their little nephew.

Years rolled by till Balna's son was fourteen years old. One day, his aunts told him the history of the family. He decided to go in search of his parents and uncles. His aunts tried to dissuade him, but the boy said, "I will return soon with success. Bless me!"

The young boy travelled long and reached a country that was full of stones, and rocks, and trees. There was also a large palace with a high tower.

As he was looking about, a gardener's wife saw him, and took pity on him. She gave him food, asked his whereabouts and said, "That high tower belongs to a wicked magician. If any one displeases him, he can turn them into stones and trees. Some time ago a prince came here, and shortly afterwards came his six brothers, and they were all turned into stones and trees. Also, there lives a beautiful lady called Balna. The magician has kept her prisoner for twelve years because she did not marry him."

The prince thought, "These must be my parents and my uncles. I have found what I've been seeking at last." He told his story to the gardener's wife, and begged her to help him stay there for some more days. She told the boy to disguise himself as a girl and pretend to be her daughter.

Punchkin found her attractive and befriended her. One day he said, "Tomorrow you shall take some flowers from me to the beautiful lady who lives in the tower."

The young prince was much delighted at this. The gardener's wife advised the boy to fasten his pendant with his name engraved into one of the bouquets he presented to his mother. On receiving the flowers, Balna recognised the boy. She was too happy to find her son in the form of a girl. When Punchkin was away, she talked to the boy. She told him, "Son, I'll somehow find out from Punchkin what his power consists in, and whether he is immortal, or can be killed."

The next day, Balna called Punchkin and expressed her desire to marry him. He was greatly delighted.

While conversing, Balna asked him, "And tell me, are you quite immortal? Can death never touch you?"

"Why do you ask?" said Punchkin.

“Because,” she replied, “if I marry you and after that, if any calamity threatens you, I may overcome it.”

The magician thus revealed, “Far, far away, there lies a desolate country covered with thick jungle. In the midst of the jungle grows a circle of palm trees. There stand six pots full of water, one above another: below the sixth pot is a small cage which contains a parrot; on it lies my life. If the parrot is killed I must die.”

Balna revealed this secret to her son, who left for that country at once. He travelled several miles and at last came to a thick jungle. He saw a large serpent making its way to an eagle’s nest built in the tree under which he lay. Inside the nest were two eaglets. The prince drew his sword, and killed the serpent. When the two old eagles returned from their hunting, they saw the dead serpent and the young prince. The mother eagle thanked him, “Dear boy, you have saved the lives of my children. Tell me if I can help you.” The boy told about his destination, and the eagle immediately carried him to the far away country. He reached the six pots full of water, over threw them, and seized the parrot. Then, thanking the eagle, he returned to Punchkin’s palace.

Punchkin saw the boy playing with his parrot. Shocked, he asked, “Hey! Where did you get that parrot? Give it to me.”

The boy prince answered, “No, let the seven princes whom you turned into rocks and trees be instantly freed.”

By a stroke of his wand, Punchkin brought to life the seven princes. In that moment, the boy tore off one of the wings of the parrot, and Punchkin’s right arm fell off. The boy pulled off the parrot’s second wing, and Punchkin’s left arm tumbled off.

Finally, the boy wrung the bird's neck, and as he did so, Punchkin's head twisted round, and with a groan, he died!

Balna walked out of the tower. She, along with her husband, son and other princes returned to their country, and all lived happily ever afterwards.

Harisaman

There was a brahmin named Harisaman in a village. He was poor, unemployed and foolish. He had many children, and they all wandered about begging for food. Once as they were wandering around, they reached a city. There they came to know that the rich man of the city wanted servants. So Harisaman and his family went to him and entered into his service. The rich man named Sthuladatta employed Harisaman's sons as keepers of his cows, and Harisaman and his wife for household works. Thus the family started living in the rich man's house.

One day there was a feast at the rich man's house. It was the occasion of his daughter's marriage. Harisaman was very happy because he and his family would get a share of the feast. But it so happened that after the feast, as everyone left, neither Harisaman nor his family was invited for

the feast. Harisaman felt dejected. He told his wife, “It is because we are poor and illiterate, that we are all treated with such disrespect here. We have to somehow gain respect among these people. I will pretend as if I know some magic believing which the people around us will give us due respect.”

That night, when everyone at the rich man’s house went off to sleep, he took away the horse which belonged to Sthuladatta’s son-in-law. Riding it to a great distance, he hid in the nearby forest. The next morning, finding the horse missing, Sthuladatta and his son-in-law sent men to search for it in every direction. Since the horse was considered a lucky charm of the son-in-law, everyone felt that the disappearance of the horse meant evil omen. The rich man announced huge price for the one who brings back the horse. Harisaman’s wife now went to Sthuladatta and told him, “Sir, it’s very distressing that the horse has disappeared. Let me tell you a secret. My husband who poses to be a stupid person in front of you is actually a master in magic. He’ll definitely help you find the horse with his magical powers.”

Sthuladatta considered her words and immediately called Harisaman and said, “It’s very wrong for you to have hidden the matter that you’ve magical powers. Now I order you, as my servant, to bring back my horse with the help of your powers.”

Harisaman asked Sthuladatta’s forgiveness for hiding the matter that he’s a magician, and immediately got into the task of finding the whereabouts of the horse. He drew all kinds of pretended diagrams, and said, “The horse has been placed by thieves on the southern boundary line from this place. It is concealed deep inside the forest, near the dilapidated building. It may move away further if you don’t send your men there immediately to fetch it.”

Accordingly, Sthuladatta’s men ran and brought the horse at once. Sthuladatta and his well-wishers were overwhelmed by Harisaman’s knowledge and started praising him. Harisaman was appointed as the chief priest and advisor of the rich man.

Days went by and one day, the rich man’s house was burgled. Men were sent here and there to nab the robber in vain. Sthuladatta sought the advice of Harisaman. Taken aback by this sudden problem in front of him, Harisaman sought a day’s time from his master, so that he could think well about his plans to solve the crisis. He said, “I will tell you tomorrow.”

The burglary in the rich man’s palace was actually carried out by the maid of the house. She was called Jihva (meaning tongue). She along

with her brother had planned and carried out the crime. When she came to know about Sthuladatta seeking the help of Harisaman to nab her and her brother, she decided to go and talk to him.

Accordingly, the maid went to Harisaman's room. As she reached neared the door of the room, she heard Harisaman talking. Harisaman was actually talking aloud to himself. He actually was blaming himself, his own tongue for unnecessarily getting himself trapped in the situation. He said, "Hey Jihva, why have you brought me into this crisis? It's your greediness that have made you do this. As you've laid the trap, you deserve the punishment too."

Jihva heard these and thought that Harisaman is warning her, she being called the 'jihva'. She decided to accept her blunder to him, and seek his help in escaping punishment. She went to him and begged, "O great man! I'm the 'jihva' you called out to. It's nice that you've found me to be guilty. But now, I realise my crime. Please help me escape punishment. I and my brother took the treasure. We've buried it under the pomegranate tree in the garden. Take them from there, and save me from our master's rage."

When Harisaman heard that, he was confused a bit. Then he realised what actually had happened. He decided to take the situation in his favour. So he told Jihva, "Young lady, I know that you and your brother did this, out of greediness. I can help you and save you from punishment if you bring those valuables to me."

The next morning, Harisaman led the rich man's men to the garden where the valuables had been buried, and made them unearth the valuables. When the rich man found some valuables missing he just said, "O sir, thank your stars for getting these valuables back. The rest of them do not belong to you at all. That's why they've been taken away be the thieves. You'll never get them back. Be happy with whatever you've got." The rich man was pleased, and gave a huge reward to Harisaman.

Now, there was a man named Devajnanin, who was the rich man's chief advisor prior to Harisaman. He somehow sensed that Harisaman was just fooling around the rich man in the name of magical powers. So he told the rich man, "I'm your well-wisher. I've doubts about Harisaman's knowledge. How can an illiterate person gain such knowledge of magic without reading books. It's better to test him, before you think of honouring him any further."

Though personally he believed in Harisaman, Sthuladatta wanted to test him so as to prove others his abilities. Accordingly, he brought a pitcher and threw a frog into it. Then he called Harisaman and said, "Sir, here's a pitcher into which I've secretly hidden something. Can you guess what it is?"

Desperate at this sudden turn of events, he went into thought. He recalled his father, and the pet name his father had given him – that of 'froggie' – and said to himself aloud, lamenting his father," Hey froggie, you're into the pool. It'll slowly destroy you!"

Hearing this, Sthuladatta and Devajnanin were surprised. Sthuladatta now said, "What a great knowledge you've! Nothing can be equivalent to your knowledge. You deserve more rewards!"

In this way, Harisaman became rich and prosperous and enjoyed a respectable life.

The Charmed Ring

Once there was a rich man who had a son who lived an idle life. Worried too much, he called his son one day and told, “My son, you’re now a youth, and need to go out into the world and explore.”

He then gave the son some money for his expenses and bid him adieu. The son took the money and left the place. He came across some herdsmen quarrelling over a dog, that some of them wished to kill. The son interfered and heard their story, and then said, “Please do not kill the

dog. I will give you one hundred rupees for it." The bargain concluded, the son parted with the money, took the dog and continued his journey.

After some time, he saw some people fighting about a cat. Some of them wanted to kill it, but others did not. The son made a deal, "Oh! Please do not kill it. I'll take it with me, and give you one hundred rupees for it." They at once gave him the cat and took the money.

The merchant's son proceeded till he reached a village, where some folk were quarrelling over a snake that had just been caught. Some of them wished to kill it, but others did not. The son once again interfered, "Please do not kill the snake. Give it to me. I'll give you one hundred rupees in return." The people agreed.

With all the money with him gone the son returned home with the dog, the cat and the snake. Seeing him back with nothing but the animals, the merchant shouted, "You fool! You deserve to stay in stables and eat fodder. Don't ever come back into the house."

So the young man stayed in the stables, with a bed made of grass. His companions were the dog, the cat, and the snake, which he had purchased so dearly. These creatures got very fond of him.

One day, the snake said to its master, "Friend, I'm in fact the son of Raja Indrasha. That day when you saved me, I had come out of the ground to drink water. Those people seized me, and would have slain me, if you had not come to my rescue. I do not know how I shall ever be able to repay you for your kindness to me. If only my father comes to know about you, he would be very glad, and would even reward you for your deed."

The merchant's son was amazed to hear this and he asked the snake, "I'd like to see your father."

The snake said, "Well, can you see the mountain over there? At the foothills of the mountain, is a sacred well. If you come with me into that well, we shall both reach my father's country. If he asks you what you would like, you ask him for the ring on his right hand, and the pot and spoon that he possesses. The ring is such that a man has only to speak to it, and immediately a beautiful furnished palace will be provided for him, while the pot and the spoon will supply him with all the delicious foods in the world."

Next morning, the merchant's son left home with his three companions. Once they reached the sacred well, the young man said to the cat and dog, "Stay here my friends. We'll be back in some time."

Then the snake and the merchant's son jumped into the well. They reached their destination in safety; and information of their arrival was sent to the king, who came on his own to them. He embraced his son, and saluted the merchant's son, and ordered for a royal treatment.

The young man stayed there a few days, during which he received the king's ring, and the pot and spoon, in recognition of this king's gratitude to him for rescuing his son.

On returning, the merchant's son and his pet friends decided to try the powers of the charmed ring, pot and spoon. The merchant's son spoke to the ring, and immediately a beautiful house and a lovely princess with golden hair appeared. He spoke to the pot and spoon, and at once, lots of delicious food was provided for them. The princess served the food to them all. Attracted by her beauty the merchant's son married her.

One morning the princess, while combing her hair, put the loose strings of her hair into a hollow bit of reed and threw them into the river that flowed under the window. The reed floated on the water for many miles, and was at last picked up by the prince of that country, who curiously opened it and saw the golden hair. At once he fell in love with the princess who he had never seen, but whose beautiful hair he had admired. He wandered desperately in search of the princess. Finding him in distress, the king of the state decided to seek the help of his aunt who was an ogress.

The ogress assumed the shape of a bee and went buzzing. Her keen sense of smell soon brought her to the beautiful princess. She took the form of an old woman, and introduced herself to the princess as her distant aunt. The princess believed in her words and invited her to come and stay in the house as long as she could.

When she had been in the house for three days, the ogress gained her confidence and told her, "Dear, I think you should keep the magic ring with you. Your husband may lose it." The princess then asked her husband for the ring, and he readily gave it to her.

The ogress waited another day and then told the princess, "Let me have a look at it." Doubting nothing, the princess removed it to show her. In a flash, the ogress seized the ring, and assuming the form of a bee flew away to the palace, where the prince was lying nearly on the point of death. She went near him and whispered, "Hey my dear, rise up. Bring forth the princess you love! Here's the magical ring!"

The prince was almost mad with joy and he told the ring to summon the princess there. The princess came, and he said, "Hey my dear, how mad I was to see you. I'd like to marry you."

The princess said in a calm tone, "Sir, you're proposing to a married woman. And if you insist, I need a month's time."

Meanwhile, the merchant's son had returned from hunting and was distressed not to find his wife in his house. Just then came the dog and the cat and said, "O master! We will go and bring back your wife."

The cat and dog reached the place where the princess had been taken to. Leaving the dog to safeguard, the cat climbed up the window of the room. Seeing him the princess felt relieved and happy. She revealed to him everything.

The cat asked, "Tell me where the charmed ring is."

"The ring is in the stomach of the ogress," she said. "All right," said the cat, "I will recover it. If we once get it, everything is ours."

Then the cat descended the wall of the house, and went and laid down near a rat's hole and pretended she was dead. Now, at that time, all the rats of the neighbourhood were assembled in that particular place where the cat had lied down. The son of the rats' king was about to be married. When the procession started from the hole, the cat spotted the bridegroom and pounced down on him. "Oh! Let me go, let me go," cried the terrified rat. "It is my wedding day."

"No, no," replied the cat. "Not unless you do something for me."

The rat community shouted in unison, "Yes sir, tell us what you want."

The cat continued, “Listen. The ogress in this house has swallowed a ring, which I very much want. If you will procure it for me, I will leave the bridegroom unhurt. If you do not, then your prince will be squeezed under my feet.”

At midnight, when the ogress was sound asleep, one of the rats went to her bedside, climbed up on her face, and inserted its tail into her throat; whereupon the ogress coughed violently, and the ring came out and rolled on to the floor. The rat seized the precious sing and ran off with it to its king, who was very glad, and went at once to the cat and released its son.

As soon as the cat received the ring, she started back with the dog to their master. They thought, “How glad our master would be to have recovered this!”

They reached their master and gave him the precious ring. He commanded the ring to fetch his princess. They lived happily ever after.

The Son of Seven Queens

Once there lived a king who had seven queens, but no children. This was grieving him, for after him, there would be no heir to inherit his kingdom.

One day a poor old fakir came to the king, and said, “Your prayers are heard, your desire shall be accomplished, and one of your seven queens shall bear a son.” The king was absolutely delighted on hearing this.

The king was very fond of hunting, and one day he set out on his hunting mission and after a long search saw a golden deer with golden horns and silver hoofs flashing past him. The king too followed the animal till he was almost exhausted. By this time, the deer too went out of sight.

At some distance away, there was a hut, outside which an old woman was spinning a cloth. The king requested her for some water. she called up her daughter in turn to give him water. The girl was so beautiful that the king was almost carried by her beauty.

It became clear to him that the girl was no other than the golden deer that he had been chasing. Her beauty bewitched him so much that he begged her to marry him. The girl said, “Give me the eyes of your seven queens, and I’ll be your bride.”

The king went home at once, plucked the eyes of his seven queens, and, after throwing the poor blind creatures into a dark room, set off once more to the girl’s hut. Seeing him back, with fourteen eyes thread together as a necklace, the girl laughed cruelly. She flung it round her mother’s neck, saying, “Wear that, little mother, as my memory, when I go with this king to his palace as his bride.”

Then the king married her, and brought her to his palace.

Soon after this incident, a baby was born to the youngest of the queens. It was a handsome boy. The boy turned out to be very affectionate and considerate to all the queens.

As he grew up, he began slowly scraping at the mud wall of their room, and soon he had made a hole big enough for him to crawl through. From this he slipped out two or three times every day to play. No one knew who he was, but everybody liked him.

Years went by, and he became quite a big lad. One day he took his bow and arrow, and went out for hunting. Once he went through the king’s palace. He saw some pigeons fluttering around the queen’s chamber, and, taking good aim, shot one dead. It came tumbling past the very window where the wicked queen was sitting. She saw the prince and recognised him to be the king’s son. Overtaken by jealous and envy, she thought, “Hmm... if this boy is alive, I cannot inherit the throne... Let me find some way to put an end to him.”

She sent word for a servant to bring the youth to her. When the lad arrived, she asked him, “Hey little boy, you seem to be a master in hunting. How about selling this pigeon that you just shot?”

The young man said firmly, “No, not at all. This pigeon is only to satisfy their hunger of my seven blind mothers.”

The queen sighed artificially, “Hmm... poor creatures. If you’re so concerned about them, why don’t you bring back their eyes?”

The youngster wondered, “Eyes! How do I bring them back?”

The queen said, “I’ll tell you where to find them, if you give me those pigeons which you shot.”

The boy was so delighted and eager to bring back the eyes of his seven mothers that he readily gave away the pigeons.

As promised the queen too told him to go and meet her mother and get back the seven queens' eyes. She then assured him saying, "If you show her this token on which I have written what I want done, my mother would definitely give those eyes. But, be careful, if you try to open this message or read it, your mission will fail."

She gave the lad a palm leaf on which were inscribed, "Kill the bearer at once, and sprinkle his blood like water!"

The young man too left happily, bearing the letter. As he walked through towns one after the other, he found people looking sad. He asked a person the reason for this. He came to know from them that the king's daughter had refused to marry, and so the throne would not have a heir. The princess had determined to marry only a person who is the son of seven mothers. The king had thus given an order to stop every youth passing by the city gate and bring him to the princess to make her choice.

Now, this young lad too was stopped by the sentries, and taken to the king's court. The princess saw him and immediately declared to her father, "Father! Here's my groom. I'll marry him."

The son of seven queens said he would not marry the princess unless they first let him recover his mothers' eyes. When the beautiful princess heard his story, she asked to him to show the inscription given by the wicked queen. The young man said, "No, I'm not supposed to open it or read it."

The princess however reasoned out, "The queen had just ordered you not to open or read this, not me."

She took the palm leaf, and reading those words, she became alert. Quietly she replaced the palm leaf with another on which she wrote, "Take care of this lad, giving him all he desires." The young prince then continued his journey.

Soon he arrived at the hut where the witch queen's mother lives. The boy showed her the message, and she then gave the necklace of eyes to him grumbly saying, "There are only thirteen of them now, for I lost one last week."

The lad, however, was too glad to get at least thirteen eyes that he immediately rushed back and reached his mothers. He gave each of the older queens a pair of their eyes, but to his mother, he gave one saying, "Dearest little mother! I will be your other eye always!"

After this he set off to marry the princess, as he had promised, but when passing by the white queen's palace he saw some pigeons on the roof. He shot one, and it came fluttering past the window. The witch queen looked

out and was shocked to see the young man alive. She immediately sent word for him to come to her. He said, “O great queen, all thanks to you. I’m happy I got back my mothers’ eyes.”

The queen, without showing any disappointment lauded him for his success and told him, “Good that you followed my advice. Well... now, this time too I would like to have the pigeon you’ve hunted. This time, go to the same old lady and handover this pigeon to her, and she would reward you with a magical cow which can give you milk throughout the day.” This time again, she gave him a note to be given to her mother. The note read, “Kill this lad without fail, and sprinkle his blood like water!”

The lad readily agreed and left the wicked queen. On his way he went to meet his princess who this again, replaced the wicked queen’s message with her own. The boy reached the old witch and handed over the message which instructed her to take good care of him and give him anything he asked for. Old witch then told the boy, “Listen, I can tell you the secret of getting that magical cow. It is guarded by eighteen thousand demons. Don’t be afraid of them. Just give them the answers that I tell you.”

The youngster then set out to bravely face the demons. They were really frightful to behold, but, plucking up courage, he whistled a tune as he walked through them. Then he saw demon milking the cow, filling the vast milk tank.

Seeing the young lad, the king demon called out, “Hey you! How did you come here? What do you want here?”

The lad answered as instructed by the old witch, said, “I want your skin, for king Indra is making a new kettle - drum, and says your skin is nice and tough.”

Hearing this the king demon shuddered, for he couldn’t disobey his master Indra’s command. So he pleaded to the lad, “If you will spare me I will give you anything I possess, even my beautiful white cow!”

To this, the son of seven queens, after a little pretended hesitation, agreed. He said, “Don’t worry! I can save you from Indra’s wrath. Actually, it would not be difficult to find a nice tough skin like yours elsewhere. Just give me this cow, I’ll take care of the rest.”

The king demon at once agreed, and the boy drove away the wonderful magical cow. The seven queens were delighted to possess such a marvellous animal. They worked from morning till night making curds and whey, besides selling milk to the confectioners. They became richer day by day.

Seeing them so comfortably settled, the young man too felt it the right time to marry his princess. As he set off, he drove through the king's palace. Again he found pigeons sitting on the parapet. He took his bow and arrow and shot at one. The queen peeped out and was shocked at the boy alive yet again. She grew red with rage. She sent for him. When he came in front of her, he profusely thanked her saying, "The cow which you helped me fetch from the demon has made us rich. I've no words to thank you."

Hearing that the other queens are well settled, she almost went mad. Without showing her feelings however she just said, "Hmm... that's good. This time again if you give me the pigeon, I'd get you more perhaps, some million-fold rice, which ripens in one night."

The youngster was absolutely charmed with this offer that he gave away the pigeon. The queen wrote a note again that read - "This time, you should not fail. Kill the lad, and sprinkle his blood like water! and handed it over to him, which, "The lad set off again on his journey, and on the way went to see his princess. He told her that there is one more mission, after which he'll marry her. The princess took away the message given to him by the wicked queen, and replaced it with the note - "Yet again give this lad all he requires, for his blood shall be as your blood!"

When the old witch read the message, told the young man, "Go and find the field guarded by eighteen million demons. Pluck the tallest spike of rice in the centre. Then, without turning back, go away."

The son of seven queens set off, and soon came to the field where, guarded by eighteen millions of demons, the million-fold rice grew. He walked on bravely and reached the centre. He plucked the tallest spike, but as he turned home wards, a thousand sweet voices rose behind him, crying softly, "Pluck me too! Oh, please pluck me too!" He looked back, and lo! There was nothing left of him but a little heap of ashes!

Now, as time passed by and the lad did not return, the old witch became uneasy, remembering the message "his blood shall be as your blood". So she set off to see what had happened to the young man.

She reached the heap of ashes, and using her magic, took a little water, and kneading the ashes into a paste, formed it into a man. Then putting a drop of blood from her little finger into its mouth, she blew on it, and instantly the son of seven queens stood up.

The old witch told him, "Why did you disobey my order. If you do that again, I'll not come to your rescue. Now be off!"

So the son of seven queens returned joyfully to his seven mothers, who soon became the richest people in the kingdom, and then celebrated their son's marriage to the clever princess with pomp and gaiety.

The princess was so clever that she would not rest until she punished the wicked queen. So she made her husband build a palace exactly like the one in which the wicked queen lives now. Then, when all was prepared, she told her husband give a grand feast to the king.

Now, the king had heard much of the mysterious son of seven queens, and his marvellous wealth, so he gladly accepted the invitation. On reaching the son's palace, he was astonished to find it similar to his own. And when his host, richly dressed, led him straight to the private hall, where the seven queens were sitting on royal thrones, he was speechless with surprise. The princess came forward, threw herself at his feet, and told him the whole story. Then the king awoke from his enchantment, and grew angry at the wicked queen who had bewitched him for so long. He ordered immediate death for her. After that, the seven queens returned to their own splendid palace, and everybody lived happily.

MAPLE KIDS

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